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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TFIZ01: DART ASSESSMENT OF FOOD, WATER, AND HEALTH NEEDS IN UMM QASR

SUMMARY

11. On 27 March, the DART, with assistance from Coalition forces, conducted an assessment of the food, water, and health situation in Umm Qasr. With regard to the Coalition military presence in Umm Qasr, the DART was impressed by the priority being placed on providing security to the community, involving the community in security and assistance decisions, and respecting the local population's desire to help themselves. While there are no urgent, life-threatening needs at the moment, the population of Umm Qasr is lacking protein-rich food and is dependant on water distributions. End Summary.

OVERVIEW

12. Although the atmosphere in Umm Qasr is marked by wariness, by the afternoon, people were out on the streets. The Coalition forces report that trust is improving daily, but it is obvious that the community, with the events of 1991 in clear memory, is waiting for proof that the regime is, in fact, finished.

SECURITY AND ACCESS

13. The DART was repeatedly assured by Coalition forces that security in Umm Qasr was under control and a humanitarian presence was welcomed by the military. However, presently there is no means to coordinate humanitarian assistance from Kuwait City at the Kuwait - Iraq border. This issue needs to be addressed immediately.

PORT

14. Heavy silting was visible in an aerial photograph of the New Port waterway. Two dredgers were located that, while not seriously damaged, are currently inoperable. However, parts appear to be available on site and repairs are underway. Lack of dredgers will not affect the arrival of the Sir Galahad, which has a shallow draft. The Sir Galahad is scheduled to arrive on 28 March following a one-day delay due to the discovery of mines in the waterway at the lower end of the Old Port. The ship is carrying approximately 230 metric tons of food and nonfood commodities.

15. Two back-up generators appear to be of sufficient power to establish a separate electrical grid for the entire port. They are not yet operational, due to a lack of ignition capability. The Coalition forces are working to resolve the issue.

16. There are five mobile vacuators at the port. The main (silo) vacuator appears undamaged. Two appear to be inoperable, but the remainder appear to have been used within the past few weeks. They are diesel operated and as of 27 March have not been operated.

17. The approximately 24 port silos have been swept for mines and are reportedly empty. The warehouses have also been swept and reported to be empty with the exception of approximately 200 bags of sugar and salt.

FOOD

18. Despite the frenzy that accompanied Kuwaiti distributions in Safwan on 26 March, Coalition forces and local residents report that food is not an urgent need at this time. Households reportedly have up to six-month stores of staple commodities (flour/rice). However, there is a need for canned meat. The Coalition forces described Umm Qasr's population as "protein-starved".

19. Kuwaiti food boxes delivered to Umm Qasr were warehoused by the Coalition forces. They have worked to establish an organized community-based distribution process, entailing one community representative from each of Umm Qasr's 85 neighborhoods. The representatives will collect food and distribute it in their specific blocks. The Coalition forces are working closely with four community leaders, including a schoolteacher and the hospital's medical director. It is hoped that this system might provide a more accurate head count in the town. If the 85 community heads represent the entire town, then there would be between 470 and 530 people living in each, if the total population of Umm Qasr is between 45,000 to 50,000, as has been reported to the Coalition forces.

10. Forty Public Distribution System (PDS) agents are reported to have either fled Umm Qasr, or are laying low. The DART was unable to obtain community-level verification of the status of the PDS agents. The Coalition forces have been told that the distribution agents were members of the Baath Party and not trusted by the population. It is not clear if community distrust applies to all agents, but the Coalition forces indicated that they were not pursuing the re-establishment of the PDS system.

11. The Coalition forces have supplied water to town residents for the past two days via two mobile tankers, which drive to different parts of the city for distribution. Bottled water is opened prior to distribution to limit the possibility that it is re-sold. The Coalition forces appear willing to continue water distributions until the pipeline is turned on, but welcomed the possibility of tankers organized by UNICEF taking over until the water pipeline comes on line.

HEALTH

12. A preliminary health assessment of the hospital in the town of Umm Qasr revealed adequate pharmaceutical stocks for three months, with the exception of medicines for certain chronic care diseases. Patients who need more treatment are referred elsewhere. The hospital sees approximately 10 malnourished children each week, although the staff did not specify their diagnosis criteria. While the severe malnutrition cases are referred to Basra, moderate or mild cases are treated with commercial infant formula. At the time of the DART visit, there were four inpatients, two recovering from war-wounds. Of the seven doctors at the hospital, only four remain. Similarly, 45 of the 70 nurses are still at the hospital. The facility is dirty, poorly equipped, and operating off a generator. The hospital staff requested protein-enhanced canned food. The administrator seemed to be caught between the need to reinforce the regime's assertion that three months' medical stores had been provided and the desire to wait two to three weeks to let things settle down before putting together a list of the hospital's needs.

ELECTRICITY

13. There are several large generators in Umm Qasr town, which combined with the generators at the port, may be sufficient to provide electricity to most of the town, according to the Coalition forces. The town's main power source is Umm Qasr, but residents reported a deterioration of service in past months. There is evidence that many residents are hooked into existing generators, but the Coalition forces say they will not know the coverage until the generators are turned on. The main hospital has a functioning generator, and the Coalition forces reported that there has not been a request for fuel from the hospital.

SCHOOLS

14. At least 23 schools (18 primary) exist in Umm Qasr. Many were being used for storage, and the Coalition forces are in the process of clearing out large amounts of

ordinance. Community leaders are being encouraged to re-open schools as they are cleared.

PROTECTION

115. General unrest after the fighting in Umm Qasr was dominated by looting of government and regime supporter properties. The Coalition forces believe that revenge/retribution beatings and killings are probably occurring, although no physical evidence has yet been encountered. Baath Party members have been arrested and/or are surrendering to the Coalition forces. The hospital director either did not understand the protection questions being put to him or did not feel comfortable discussing the subject.

CONCLUSIONS

116. The DART identified the following challenges for providing humanitarian assistance in Umm Qasr: shortage of local interpreters, especially female; reaching vulnerable populations; ensuring proper representation in leadership/contacts; establishing a new system/staff for World Food Program distribution; managing a possible migration from Basra if distribution begins in Um Qasr and people able to leave Basra.

JONES